

# City of Highland

## CODE OF ETHICS

for members of

Highland City Council,  
Boards, Commissions and  
Committees



### **PREAMBLE**

The citizens and businesses of Highland are entitled to have fair, ethical and accountable local government which has earned the public's full confidence for integrity. In keeping with the City of Highland's Commitment to excellence, the effective functioning of democratic government therefore requires that:

- ✓ public officials, both elected and appointed, comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government;
- ✓ public officials be independent, impartial and fair in their judgement and actions;
- ✓ public office be used for public good, not for personal gain; and
- ✓ public deliberations and processes be conducted openly, unless legally confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

To this end, the Highland City Council has adopted a Code of Ethics for members\* of the City Council and of the City's boards, commissions and committees to assure public confidence in the integrity of local government and its effective and fair operation.

### **PRINCIPLES**

#### *1. Act in the Public Interest*

Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, members will work for the common good of the people of Highland and not for any private or personal interest, and they will assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims and transactions coming before the Highland City Council, boards, commissions and committees.

#### *2. Comply with the Law*

Members shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of California and the City of Highland in the performance of their public duties. These laws include, but are not limited to: the United States and California constitutions; laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial

disclosures, employer responsibilities, and open processes of government; and City ordinances and policies.

#### *3. Conduct of Members*

The professional and personal conduct of members must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of Council, boards, commissions and committees, the staff or public.

#### *4. Respect for the Process*

Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules or order established by the City Council, boards, commissions and committees governing the deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful involvement of the public, and implementation of policy decisions of the City Council by City staff.

#### *5. Conduct of Public Meetings*

Members shall prepare themselves for public issues; listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body; and focus on the business at hand. They shall refrain from interrupting other speakers; making personal comments not germane to the business of the body; or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.

#### *6. Decisions Based on Merit*

Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand, rather than on unrelated considerations.

#### *7. Communication*

Members shall publicly share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the Council or boards and commissions, which they may have received from sources outside of the public decision-making process.

#### *8. Conflict of Interest*

In order to assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good,

members shall not use their official positions to influence government decisions in which they have a material financial interest or where they have an organizational responsibility or personal relationship, which may give the appearance of a conflict of interest. In accordance with the law, members shall disclose investments, interests in real property, sources of income, and gifts, and they shall abstain from participating in deliberations and decision-making where conflicts may exist.

#### 9. *Gifts and Favors*

Members shall not take any special advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain, by virtue of their public office, that are not available to the public in general. They shall refrain from accepting any gifts, favors or promises of future benefits which might compromise their independence of judgement or action or give the appearance of being compromised.

#### 10. *Confidential Information*

Members shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning the property, personnel or affairs of the City. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests.

#### 11. *Use of Public Resources*

Members shall not use public resources not available to the public in general, such as City staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities, for private gain or personal purposes.

#### 12. *Representation of Private Interests*

In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of Council shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of third parties before the Council or any board, commission or proceeding of the City, nor shall members of boards and commissions appear before their own bodies or before the Council on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the

areas of service of their bodies.

#### 13. *Advocacy*

Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the City Council, board or commission to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When presenting their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City of Highland, nor shall they allow the inference that they do.

#### 14. *Policy Role of Members*

Members shall respect and adhere to the council-manager structure of Highland City government. In this structure, the City Council determines the policies of the City with the advice, information and analysis provided by the public, boards and commissions, and City staff. Members therefore shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the City or the professional duties of City staff; nor shall they impair the ability of staff to implement Council policy decisions.

#### 15. *Independence of Boards and Commissions*

Because of the value of the independent advice of boards and commissions to the public decision-making process, members of Council shall refrain from using their position to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of board and commission proceedings.

#### 16. *Positive Work Place Environment*

Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with City employees to in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

#### 17. *Implementation*

As an expression of the standards of conduct for members expected by the City, the Highland Code of Ethics is intended to be self-

enforcing. It therefore becomes most effective when members are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions. For this reason, ethical standards shall be included in the regular orientations for candidates for City Council, applicants to boards and commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement affirming they read and understand the City of Highland Code of Ethics. In addition, the Code of Ethics shall be annually reviewed by the City Council, boards and commissions, and the City Council shall consider recommendations from boards and commissions and update it as necessary.

#### 18. *Compliance and Enforcement*

The Highland Code of Ethics expresses standards of ethical conduct expected for members of the Highland City Council, boards and commissions. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to assure that the ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government.

The chairs of boards and commissions and the Mayor have the additional responsibility to intervene when actions of members that appear to be in violation of the Code of Ethics are brought to their attention.

The City Council may impose sanctions on members whose conduct does not comply with the City's ethical standards, such as reprimand, formal censure, or loss of committee assignments. The City Council also may remove members of boards and commissions from office.

A violation of this Code of Ethics shall not be considered a basis for challenging the validity of a Council, board or commission decision.

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\* For ease of reference in the Code of Ethics, the term "member" refers to any member of the Highland City Council or any of the City's boards, commissions and committees established by City ordinance or Council policy.

Adopted by the Highland City Council  
January 27, 2004

For information, contact the Highland  
City Clerk at 909.864.6861.